

D&D Fight Club

Ver'Shan, Ambush Drake Scout

Savage Progressions
By Robert Wiese



Lacking the innate maliciousness of his brethren, once he reached maturity Ver'Shan began to range farther and farther away from the pack, enjoying the freedom that solitude gave him. Freedom from the expectations of those who raised him, freedom to explore the natural world at will, and most importantly, freedom to choose which creatures to prey upon for food -- all of these were what eventually saved the curious ambush drake from the fate chosen by his former packmates. Deciding to spring a trap upon a band of unwary adventurers, Ver'Shan's entire family died in the resulting battle, unprepared for the brutal magical reprisal that followed their initial foray into the humanoids' campsite.



Having held back from the initial attack, Ver'Shan wisely chose to flee from the scene of the battle rather than join in the conflict, a decision that he has never regretted. Though he can defend himself and is an accomplished hunter as well, Ver'Shan is patient, preferring to shadow quarry of questionable strength, observing from afar to assess the possible danger of attack. On more than one occasion Ver'Shan has broken off pursuit of prey that proved to be far too dangerous for the ambush drake to handle. By the same token, he has also taken advantage of his prey after it has run afoul of other dangers, such as when it finds itself depleted, injured, or best yet, completely unconscious or asleep. Aware of his own mental limitations, Ver'Shan prefers to prey upon creatures that he perceives as being less intelligent than himself. Animals, large and small, have fallen to his appetite, as have less intelligent humanoids such as orcs, goblinoids of various types, and even the occasional gnoll or ogre.

Never staying in one place for any length of time, Ver'Shan prefers to range across country, traveling to places he has never seen before. His curiosity for what he'll find over the next ridge, or across the next valley, or through the next wood, is endless, and his ability to remain undetected allows him the freedom to safely pursue this constant vocation of exploration. Over the course of his travels, Ver'Shan has a growing appreciation for gems of all types, and he seeks to take possession of them whenever possible. Since he is ultimately a mobile creature, he keeps his stash of gems stored in the fleshy pocket of his gizzard from where he can readily cough them back up in order to spend time appreciating their beauty.

*Note: Ambush drakes are described in *Monster Manual III*.*

Combat

In combat, Ver'Shan prefers to pick away at an opponent, using hit-and-run tactics to wear them down over the course of time. Ver'Shan is a patient hunter, capable of maintaining this tactic for several days as his quarry is slowly ground down by fatigue and minor wounds, not to mention the drake's venomous bite. Then, when he deems that he has minimized the threat posed to him, Ver'Shan moves in for the kill, finishing his prey off quickly before dragging them off to a secluded hideaway for his dining pleasure.

Ver'Shan (Level 4)

At this stage, Ver'Shan has just broken away from his family, which has recently been slain by seasoned adventurers. He spends most of his time traveling and hunting small game for sustenance. Wary of humanoids in general, but intensely curious, Ver'Shan takes every opportunity to observe these creatures without actually coming into direct contact with them. He has no interest in suffering the same fate as his foolish packmates, and so he is careful to keep his distance.

Ver'Shan CR 9

Male ambush drake scout 4

NMediumdragon

Init +8; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, scent; **Listen** +13, **Spot** +13

Languages Common, Draconic

AC 19, touch 13, **flat-footed** 16; uncanny dodge

(+3 Dex, +6 natural)

hp 118 (11 **HD**)

Immune magic sleep effects and paralysis

SR 20

Fort +12, **Ref** +12, **Will** +6

Speed 50 ft. (10 **squares**), fly 30 ft. (poor)

Melee bite +13 (1d8+3 plus poison) and

2 claws +11 (1d6+1)

Base Atk +10; **Grp** +13

Atk Options breath weapon, poison, skirmish (+1d6, +1 AC*)

Abilities **Str** 16, **Dex** 16, **Con** 20, **Int** 7, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 9

SQ battle fortitude, fast movement, telepathic link 30 ft., trackless step, trapfinding

Feats Alertness, Dodge[B], Improved Initiative, Multiattack, Track

Skills Hide +18, Listen +13, Move Silently +14, Search +8, Spot +13, Survival +10 (+12 when following tracks)

Possessions amulet of health +2, elemental gem (earth), 4 jaspers (50 gp each), 2 tourmalines (100 gp each), black pearls (500 gp)

Uncanny Dodge (Ex): Ver'Shan cannot be caught flat-footed and reacts to danger before his senses would normally allow him to do so. See the barbarian class feature, page 26 of the *Player's Handbook*.

Breath Weapon (Su) 30-foot cone, once every 1d4 rounds, *slow* (duration 11 rounds), Will DC 18 negates. Ver'Shan is immune to the breath weapons of other ambush drakes.

Poison (Ex) Injury, Fortitude DC 18, initial and secondary damage 1d6 Dex. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Skirmish (Ex) Ver'Shan relies on mobility to deal extra damage and improve his defense. He deals an extra 1d6 points of damage on all attacks he makes during any round in which he moves at least 10 feet away from where he was at the start of his turn. The extra damage applies only to attacks made after Ver'Shan has moved at least 10 feet. The skirmish ability cannot be used while mounted. The extra damage applies only against living creatures that have a discernible anatomy. Undead, constructs, oozes, plants, incorporeal creatures, and creatures immune to extra damage from critical hits are not vulnerable to this additional damage. Ver'Shan must be able to see the target well enough to pick out a vital spot and must be able to reach such a spot. Ver'Shan can apply this extra damage to ranged attacks made while skirmishing, but only if the target is within 30 feet.

Additionally, Ver'Shan gains a +1 competence bonus* to Armor Class during any round in which he moves at least 10 feet. The bonus applies as soon as the scout has moved 10 feet, and lasts until the start of his next turn.

*The competence bonus has already been figured into the statistics above.

Battle Fortitude (Ex) Ver'Shan gains a +1 competence bonus on Fortitude saves and initiative checks.

Fast Movement (Ex) Ver'Shan's land speed is faster (+10 foot enhancement bonus) than the norm for his race. See the barbarian class feature, page 25 of the *Player's Handbook*.

Telepathic Link (Ex) Ambush drakes share a communal consciousness, enabling them to communicate telepathically with other ambush drakes. A group of ambush drakes within 30 feet of each other are in constant contact. If one is aware of a particular danger, they all are. If one in the group is not flat-footed, none of them are. No ambush drake in the group is considered flanked unless all are.

Trackless Step (Ex): Ver'Shan cannot be tracked in natural surroundings. See the druid class feature, page 36 of the *Player's Handbook*.

Trapfinding (Ex) Ver'Shan can use the Search skill to locate traps with a DC higher than 20, and he can use Disable Device (if taken) to bypass a trap or disarm magic traps. See the rogue class feature, page 50 of the *Player's Handbook*.

Skills Ver'Shan receives a +4 racial bonus on Hide checks.

Ver'Shan at 7th Class Level

Ver'Shan is an accomplished hunter at this stage and has even adventured once or twice in the company of such creatures that might be willing to allow him to tag along on their exploits. Serving as a scout and lookout for such groups, Ver'Shan has garnered considerable knowledge regarding the difference between those creatures who seek to preserve the world around them, and those who destroy the world around them. Not appreciative of the latter, they have become the favored prey of Ver'Shan, whenever he can identify them for what they are. Some, being brutish and stupid, are easier to ferret out than others. Still, the patient ambush drake is just as happy to wait and watch, rather than acting rashly and putting himself needlessly in harm's way.

Ver'Shan CR 14

Male ambush drake scout 9

N Medium dragon

Init +9; Senses darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, scent; Listen +17, Spot +20

Languages Common, Draconic

AC 20, touch 14, flat-footed 16; uncanny dodge
(+4 Dex, +6 natural)

hp 186 (16 HD)

Immune magic sleep effects and paralysis

SR 25

Resist evasion

Fort +15, Ref +15, Will +8

Speed 50 ft. (10 squares), fly 30 ft. (poor)
Melee bite +17 (1d8+4 plus poison) and

2 claws +15 (1d6+2)

Base Atk +13; **Grp** +17

Atk Options breath weapon, poison, skirmish (+3d6, +2 AC*)

Abilities Str 18, Dex 18, Con 22, Int 9, Wis 10, Cha 9

SQ battle fortitude, camouflage, evasion, fast movement, flawless stride, telepathic link 30 ft., trackless step, trapfinding

Feats Alertness, Combat Reflexes, Dodge[B], Improved Initiative, Mobility, Multiattack, Spring Attack[B], Track

Skills Climb +13, Hide +23, Listen +17, Move Silently +22, Search +11, Spot +20, Survival +12 (+14 when following tracks)

Possessions amulet of health +4, ioun stones (pale blue rhomboid [+2 Str], deep red sphere [+2 Dex]), 5 red garnets (100 gp each), 4 golden yellow topazes (500 gp each), 2 fire opals (1,000 gp each)

Uncanny Dodge (Ex): Ver'Shan cannot be caught flat-footed and reacts to danger before his senses would normally allow him to do so. See the barbarian class feature, page 26 of the *Player's Handbook*.

Evasion (Ex) Ver'Shan can avoid damage from certain attacks with a successful Reflex save. See the monk class feature, page 41 of the *Player's Handbook*.

Breath Weapon (Su) 30-foot cone, once every 1d4 rounds, *slow* (duration 16 rounds), Will DC 19 negates. Ver'Shan is immune to the breath weapons of other ambush drakes.

Poison (Ex) Injury, Fortitude DC 19, initial and secondary damage 1d6 Dex. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Skirmish (Ex) Ver'Shan relies on mobility to deal extra damage and improve his defense. He deals an extra 3d6 points of damage on all attacks he makes during any round in which he moves at least 10 feet away from where he was at the start of his turn. The extra damage applies only to attacks made after Ver'Shan has moved at least 10 feet. The skirmish ability cannot be used while mounted. The extra damage applies only against living creatures that have a discernible anatomy. Undead, constructs, oozes, plants, incorporeal creatures, and creatures immune to extra damage from critical hits are not vulnerable to this additional damage. Ver'Shan must be able to see the target well enough to pick out a vital spot and must be able to reach such a spot. Ver'Shan can apply this extra damage to ranged attacks made while skirmishing, but only if the target is within 30 feet. Additionally, Ver'Shan gains a +2 competence bonus* to Armor Class during any round in which he moves at least 10 feet. The bonus applies as soon as the scout has moved 10 feet, and lasts until the start of his next turn.

*The competence bonus has already been figured into the statistics above.

Battle Fortitude (Ex) Ver'Shan gains a +1 competence bonus on Fortitude saves and initiative checks.

Camouflage (Ex) Ver'Shan can use the Hide skill in any sort of natural terrain.

Fast Movement (Ex) Ver'Shan's land speed is faster (+10 foot enhancement bonus) than the norm for his race. See the barbarian class feature, page 25 of the *Player's Handbook*.

Flawless Stride (Ex) Ver'Shan can move through any sort of terrain that slows movement (such as undergrowth, rubble, and similar terrain) at his normal speed and without taking damage or suffering any other impairment. This ability does not let him move more quickly through terrain that requires a Climb or Swim check to navigate, nor can he move more quickly through terrain or undergrowth that has been magically manipulated to impede motion.

Telepathic Link (Ex) Ambush drakes share a communal consciousness, enabling them to communicate telepathically with other ambush drakes. A group of ambush drakes within 30 feet of each other are in constant

contact. If one is aware of a particular danger, they all are. If one in the group is not flat-footed, none of them are. No ambush drake in the group is considered flanked unless all are.

Trackless Step (Ex): Ver'Shan cannot be tracked in natural surroundings. See the druid class feature, page 36 of the *Player's Handbook*.

Trapfinding (Ex) Ver'Shan can use the Search skill to locate traps with a DC higher than 20, and he can use Disable Device (if taken) to bypass a trap or disarm magic traps. See the rogue class feature, page 50 of the *Player's Handbook*.

Skills Ver'Shan receives a +4 racial bonus on Hide checks.

Ver'Shan at 13th Class Level

Ver'Shan has become a master hunter and scout, and he travels where he will, exploring the world even as he seeks to dispatch those who would spoil it. A champion of the wilderness, the wily ambush drake is a terrifying opponent to those who would seek to rape the lands they live in needlessly. Whenever he encounters a threat greater than he can deal with personally, which is rare, Ver'Shan has been known to enlist the aid of various druidic factions for assistance. The ambush drake is quite a sight to those unfamiliar with him, as he roams the wilderness with a trio of *ioun stones* floating about his head. Nevertheless, he is known and respected by many in the natural community, and he has come to deeply appreciate the ideals of preservation, even as he despises those who would mistreat the natural world around them.

Ver'Shan CR 18

Male ambush drake scout 13

N Medium dragon

Init +10; **Senses** blindsense 30 ft., darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, scent; **Listen** +22, **Spot** +20

Languages Common, Draconic

AC 20, touch 14, flat-footed 16; uncanny dodge

(+4 Dex, +6 natural)

hp 248 (20 HD); regeneration 1 hp/hour

Immune magic sleep effects and paralysis

SR 29

Resist evasion

Fort +18, **Ref** +17, **Will** +9

Speed 60 ft. (12 squares), fly 30 ft. (poor)

Melee bite +20 (1d8+4 plus poison) and

2 claws +18 (1d6+2)

Base Atk +16; **Grp** +20

Atk Options breath weapon, poison, skirmish (+4d6, +3 AC*)

Abilities Str 18, Dex 18, Con 24, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 9

SQ battle fortitude, camouflage, evasion, fast movement, flawless stride, telepathic link 30 ft., trackless step, trapfinding

Feats Alertness, Combat Reflexes, Danger Sense [CAd], Dodge[B], Improved Initiative, Improved Swimming [CAd] [B], Mobility, Multiattack, Spring Attack[B], Track

Skills Climb +14, Hide +26, Listen +22, Move Silently +22, Search +17, Spot +20, Survival +16 (+18 when following tracks), Swim +16

Possessions amulet of health +6, *ioun stones* (pale blue rhomboid [+2 Str], deep red sphere [+2 Dex], pearly white spindle), 10 beads of force, 5 red garnets (100 gp each), 4 golden yellow topazes (500 gp each), 3

sapphires (1,000 gp each), 2 diamonds (5,000 gp each)

Uncanny Dodge (Ex): Ver'Shan cannot be caught flat-footed and reacts to danger before his senses would normally allow him to do so. See the barbarian class feature, page 26 of the *Player's Handbook*.

Evasion (Ex) Ver'Shan can avoid damage from certain attacks with a successful Reflex save. See the monk class feature, page 41 of the *Player's Handbook*.

Breath Weapon (Su) 30-foot cone, once every 1d4 rounds, *slow* (duration 20 rounds), Will DC 20 negates. Ver'Shan is immune to the breath weapons of other ambush drakes.

Poison (Ex) Injury, Fortitude DC 20, initial and secondary damage 1d6 Dex. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Skirmish (Ex) Ver'Shan relies on mobility to deal extra damage and improve his defense. He deals an extra 4d6 points of damage on all attacks he makes during any round in which he moves at least 10 feet away from where he was at the start of his turn. The extra damage applies only to attacks made after Ver'Shan has moved at least 10 feet. The skirmish ability cannot be used while mounted. The extra damage applies only against living creatures that have a discernible anatomy. Undead, constructs, oozes, plants, incorporeal creatures, and creatures immune to extra damage from critical hits are not vulnerable to this additional damage. Ver'Shan must be able to see the target well enough to pick out a vital spot and must be able to reach such a spot. Ver'Shan can apply this extra damage to ranged attacks made while skirmishing, but only if the target is within 30 feet. Additionally, Ver'Shan gains a +3 competence bonus* to Armor Class during any round in which he moves at least 10 feet. The bonus applies as soon as the scout has moved 10 feet, and lasts until the start of his next turn.

*The competence bonus has already been figured into the statistics above.

Battle Fortitude (Ex) Ver'Shan gains a +2 competence bonus on Fortitude saves and initiative checks.

Camouflage (Ex) Ver'Shan can use the Hide skill in any sort of natural terrain.

Fast Movement (Ex) Ver'Shan's land speed is faster (+20 foot enhancement bonus) than the norm for his race. See the barbarian class feature, page 25 of the *Player's Handbook*.

Flawless Stride (Ex) Ver'Shan can move through any sort of terrain that slows movement (such as undergrowth, rubble, and similar terrain) at his normal speed and without taking damage or suffering any other impairment. This ability does not let him move more quickly through terrain that requires a Climb or Swim check to navigate, nor can he move more quickly through terrain or undergrowth that has been magically manipulated to impede motion.

Telepathic Link (Ex) Ambush drakes share a communal consciousness, enabling them to communicate telepathically with other ambush drakes. A group of ambush drakes within 30 feet of each other are in constant contact. If one is aware of a particular danger, they all are. If one in the group is not flat-footed, none of them are. No ambush drake in the group is considered flanked unless all are.

Trackless Step (Ex): Ver'Shan cannot be tracked in natural surroundings. See the druid class feature, page 36 of the *Player's Handbook*.

Trapfinding (Ex) Ver'Shan can use the Search skill to locate traps with a DC higher than 20, and he can use Disable Device (if taken) to bypass a trap or disarm magic traps. See the rogue class feature, page 50 of the *Player's Handbook*.

Skills Ver'Shan receives a +4 racial bonus on Hide checks.

Ambush Drake Template Class

Quick and canny hunters, ambush drakes prefer pack tactics in dealing with prey larger and/or smarter than themselves, though particularly skilled hunters utilize their terrain, as well as the cover of darkness, to overcome threats singly or in pairs. The table below shows the advancement of these creatures as they grow to maturity. You are far more likely to encounter these creatures in their adult or advanced forms, than as wyrmlings (1st and 2nd level), juvenile (3rd and 4th level), or even young adults (5th and 6th level). Nevertheless, unwary adventures that do stumble upon younger ambush drakes generally find that the older members of their packs are not far off.

Level	Hit Dice	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	CR	Natural Armor	Special
1st	1d12	+1	+2	+2	+2	+1	+0	+4 Con, -4 Int, darkvision 60 ft., immunity to magic sleep effects and paralysis, low-light vision, scent
2nd	2d12	+2	+3	+3	+3	+1	+1	Poison, telepathic link 15 ft.
3rd	3d12	+3	+3	+3	+3	+2	+2	+1 Str, fly 15 ft. (poor)
4th	4d12	+4	+4	+4	+4	+2	+3	Spell resistance
5th	5d12	+5	+4	+4	+4	+3	+4	+2 Str, fly 30 ft. (poor)
6th	6d12	+6	+5	+5	+5	+4	+5	Telepathic link 30 ft.
7th	7d12	+7	+5	+5	+5	+5	+6	Breath weapon

Class Skills (6 + Int modifier per level): Hide, Listen, Move Silently, Spot

Class Features

All the following are class features of the ambush drake template class. An ambush drake must take all levels of this class before it can take levels in any other class. Scout is the favored class of the ambush drake, outside of its typical advancement. Ambush drakes speak Draconic.

Ability Score Adjustments: At 1st level the ambush drake receives a +4 racial bonus to its Constitution and a -4 racial penalty to their Intelligence. As dragons, these creatures begin life using the elite array, typically arranged as such (Str 13, Dex 15, Con 14, Int 11, Wis 10, Cha 9), prior to racial adjustments. At 3rd level, ambush drakes receive a +1 racial bonus to its Strength, and it receives a +2 racial bonus to its Strength at 5th level. As their Strength increases, so does their ability to fly.

Skills: Ambush drakes have a +4 racial bonus on Hide checks.

Natural Armor: At 1st level, ambush drakes have a natural armor bonus of +0. Wyrmling ambush drakes are particularly vulnerable to predators, and the adults of the pack closely guard them. This bonus increases by +1 at each level up to a maximum of +6 at 7th level.

Bite Attack: An ambush drake's primary attack is its bite. Possessing a powerful set of jaws, the creature can deal 1d8 points of damage on a successful hit.

Claw Attacks: Ambush drakes also possess a pair of powerful foreclaws, which they use to good effect by digging into the flesh of their prey for 1d6 points of damage on a successful hit.

Speed: Ambush drakes can cover distance over ground quickly, moving at a speed of 40 feet. As they grow older and stronger, they develop their wings and the ability to fly, though they tend to be clumsy in the air at best. Because of this, they usually use their flight to escape when necessary, or when it might give them an initial or momentary combat advantage. Otherwise they prefer to move along the ground.

Poison (Ex): Starting at 2nd level, ambush drakes develop a pair of glands that can deliver a massive dose of poison through various teeth in their mouth. A successful bite attack delivers this venom, forcing the ambush drake's prey to make a successful Fortitude saving throw DC 17 or suffer 1d6 points of Dexterity damage. The secondary damage of the poison has the same effect. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Telepathic Link (Ex): Starting at 2nd level, ambush drakes develop a telepathic link, allowing them to share a communal consciousness. This enables them to communicate telepathically with other ambush drakes. The range of this link is limited to 15 feet until the creature reaches 6th level, when it expands to 30 feet. A group of adult ambush drakes within 30 feet of each other are in constant contact. If one is aware of a particular danger, they all are. If one in the group is not flat-footed, none of them are. No ambush drake in the group is considered flanked unless all are.

Breath Weapon (Su): Upon reaching adulthood at 7th level, an ambush drake develops a nasty breath weapon that it can use to slow down potential prey. Capable of using their breath weapon once every 1d4 rounds, an ambush drake releases a 30-foot cone of gas that has the effect of a *slow* spell (duration 7 rounds). A successful Will save DC 17 negates this effect. The save DC is Constitution-based.

About the Author

Robert Wiese entered the gaming hobby through the Boy Scouts and progressed from green recruit to head of the most powerful gaming fan organization in the world. He served as head of the RPGA Network for almost seven years, overseeing the creation of the **Living Greyhawk** and **Living Force** campaigns, among other achievements. Eventually, he returned to private life in Reno, Nevada, where he spends as much time as possible with his wife, new son Owen, and many pets.

He is still involved in writing, organizing conventions, and playing, and he models proteins for the Biochemistry Department of the University of Nevada, Reno.

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